Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee Commitment: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Recent business scandals like Satyam scandal of falsified accounts, Lehman brothers collapse, Common wealth Games, 2G Spectrum frauds to name a few have shaken the corporate world and have placed an immoral front. In the aftermath of these acts, the business community is rethinking in discharging their responsibilities towards various stakeholders. Despite the enormous concentration on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, less stress has been given to the employee perspective. The current paper contributes in the efforts to understand CSR from the employee perspective. CSR describes the relationship between the organisation and the stakeholders.

The main objective of the study was to explore the relationship between perceptions of CSR towards external stakeholders (social and non-social stakeholders), internal stakeholders (employees), ethics and employee commitment. Further, it also aimed to investigate differences among perceptions of CSR and employee commitment according to gender, tenure and hierarchy. The sample comprised 85 employees working in diverse sectors. The questionnaires were administered through an online survey. Pearson correlation coefficient and independent sample t – test analysis was used to prove the hypothesis. The results obtained were consistent to the hypothesis formulated.

Results of the study indicate that:

- The perceptions of CSR towards external stakeholders are positively related to employee commitment. The external stakeholders in this paper are limited to community, government, investor, suppliers and customers.
- The perceptions of CSR towards internal stakeholders are positively related to employee commitment.
- Female employees show stronger preferences for the CSR initiatives in the organisation than male employees.

These findings have implication that Corporate Social Responsibility affects commitment level of employees. The positive relationship between perceptions of CSR and commitment emphasizes the payoff that may flow from investment in CSR. The relationship between external CSR and commitment suggests the benefits are not restricted to external reputation and external stakeholder management, but may also be reflected in the behavior of internal stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

The overwhelming magnitude of recent corporate scandals has evoked a wave of soul searching among practitioners and academics. Driven by a quest to understand this remarkable decline in ethical conduct, an abundance of new research is being conducted . While most agree that social responsibility is a strong business imperative, there is little agreement about what it constitutes or how it should be incorporated. The problem lies in the disconnected silos of knowledge being concurrently developed and replicated in various business disciplines. Add to this evolving social standards and cultural differences superimposed on a global business landscape, and it is easy to see why the problem may appear intractable.

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Tradition can be an anchor for a business that should be sailing smoothly. One reason those confidence is low maybe because the companies recognize a lack of organizational commitment of employees towards the vision of the company. Vision needs to be shared with all employees so that each person can assess it in conjunction with his or her own goal. Naturally, before employees can accept a corporate vision they must understand it, they must be aware of the organization culture, philosophy and the structure of the organization… and there lies the challenge. The key to understanding begins with a sound theoretical model and a process for organizational development. This common sense framework can be used to increase performance levels by communicating your plans in an easy to understand format. Finding a metaphor that employees relate to helps everyone, better understanding of the vision, and how their efforts can contribute to the success of the organization.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) explains the impact of

business transactions and activities on the wider community and considers how it can be exploited or impacted in an effective manner .When business is booming and the bottom line is comfortable, corporate responsibility seems to be an achievable goal. But in difficult times, "responsibility" and "accountability" are surprise. CSR never depends on the company performance and profitability. It is a much needed responsibility on the part of big corporates irrespective of their performance records. They should remember that while firms with superior CSR performance have done well in the past whereas firms with poor CSR reputations have performed poorly (Vogel, 2008).

The notion of CSR was initially advocated by Beyer (1972) and Drucker (1974) while stating that corporations should do social activities for the welfare of the community and feel sense of self-ombudsman ship. It was argued that corporations are earning huge amount of profits from community and deteriorating the natural resources, therefore they should contribute for the sustainability of the environment and other natural resources and work for the uplifting of the society.

The extending literature on corporate social responsibility (CSR) provides various de?nitions of the concept (Bowen, 1953; Carroll, 1979, 1991; Davis, 1960; Davis and Blomstrom 1966; Eells and Walton, 1974; Epstein, 1987; Frederick, 1960; Fitch, 1976; Jones, 1980; McGuire, 1963; Sethi, 1975). The social responsibility of business includes the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time (Carroll, 1979). As stated by Votaw (1972), CSR "means something, but not always the same thing, to everybody". According to Bowen (1953), one of the ?rst scholars to de?ne the concept, CSR is the obligation of a businessmen "to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society". Since this de?nition of CSR, literature has provided contradictory de?nitions of the concept. The elaborate review of Carroll (1999), which traces the evolution of the CSR construct since the 1950s, clearly indicated that one of the main problems in the literature is to sketch out a conceptual framework of CSR.

Although Carroll (1999) described the de?nition of Davis as a restricted version of CSR, he also distinguished between the economic component and the non-economic components of CSR; the former is what the business does for itself, while the latter are what the business does for others (Carroll, 1999). Despite his attractive distinction, Carroll (1999) stated that "economic

viability is something business does for society as well" and described the economic component as "a responsibility to produce goods and services that society wants and to sell them at a pro?t". However, this de?nition of the economic component might indicate the basic function of business in the society.

According to Eells and Walton (1974) "in its broadest sense, corporate social responsibility represents a concern with the needs and goals of society which goes beyond the merely economic". In the present study, the economic component is excluded from the de?nition of CSR. Therefore, CSR is de?ned as a corporate behavior that aims to impact stakeholders positively and that go beyond the economic interests.

Heslin and Achoa (2008) emphasized the strategic significance of corporate social responsibility for corporate success. However, little research so far has focused on employee's perceptions towards CSR and its influence on their organizational commitment. On the other hand companies are also worried about high employee turnover, employee absenteeism and employee low motivation towards work and organization.

CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP

Corporate citizenship appears in the literature with many meanings and approaches, and frequently without a precise definition (e.g., Grit, 2004; Matten et al., 2003; Sharma, 2004; Verschoor, 2006; Waddock, 2004). The expression is often used interchangeably with other concepts such as corporate social responsibility, corporate social responsiveness and corporate social performance (Küskü & Zarkada-Fraser, 2004; Pinkston & Carroll, 1994). However, according to Küskü and Zarkada-Fraser (2004), the expression 'corporate citizenship' is a clearly identifiable and empirically researchable construct (Pinkston & Carroll, 1994). In their view, the operationalization resulting from Maignan et al.'s (1999; based on Carroll, 1979, 1991) definition is a list of factual statements of practices that are free of value judgments. It has a clear philosophical stance (corporations are capable of assuming responsibilities), provides normative prescriptions (such responsibilities must extend further than the generation of profit and obedience of law) and is based on the assumption that stakeholders have articulate expectations of morality and participation in social affairs.

Corporate citizenship is "the extent to which businesses meet the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary responsibilities placed on them by their various stakeholders" (Maignan et al., 1999, p. 457). Economic responsibilities include the duty to be productive, to

maintain corporate economic wealth and to meet consumption needs. Legal responsibilities require that companies pursue their economic mission within the prescriptions of the law. Ethical responsibilities require that companies abide by the society's mores. Discretionary responsibilities are those that meet the society's desire to see companies actively involved in societal betterment beyond economic, legal and ethical activities.

Corporate citizenship has been mainly studied at the organizational level of analysis. Few studies (e.g., Peterson, 2004) have looked at how individual employees (the firm's internal audience) develop attitudes and behaviours according to the ways they perceive corporate citizenship.

The Concept of Corporate Citizenship is a driving force of modern argument by practitioners and academics and concern of CSR as a business matter (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Porter & Kramer, 2002; Wilner, 2008).

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIVENESS

Corporate social responsiveness is the way in which CSR is conceptualized. There are concerns with the concept of CSR and its related concepts, such as corporate social responsiveness (Preston & Post, 1975; Wartick & Cochran, 1985). In recognizing the business aspects of CSR, Carroll (1979) developed a conceptual model including three dimensions; discretionary, ethical and economic responsibility. The model was used by Wartick and Cochran (1985) and Wood (1991) to build a complete model of corporate social performance. Incorporating CSR and corporate social responsiveness, Wood (1991) emphasized the need of measuring corporate social performance. Elaborating the discretionary dimension; managers' moral responsibilities in selecting activities to achieve socially responsible outcomes, Schwarz and Carroll (2003) improved the concept of CSR beyond philanthropic framework. This new paradigm integrated CSR in to the main business functions removing it outside 'non-business' voluntary activity label. Further, 3C-SR model, a refined version, (Meehan at al, 2006) guides managers in dealing with the growing number of social conscious consumers and achieving economic and social objectives simultaneously. Epstein (1979) duly noted that "social responsibility relates to outcomes or products, whereas social responsiveness relates to process; these two perspectives have significantly different implications for the firm" (Wartick & Cochran, 1985). While this is not directly considered in the present study, the implications from the findings of this study will impact the understanding of the corporate social responsiveness concept on employee attitudes and employee perceptions.

Corporate Social Performance

Sethi (1975) proposed that corporate social performance was evaluated based on classified corporate behavior. Wartick and Cochran (1985) conceptualized corporate social performance as "...social responsibility as principles, social responsiveness is thought of as processes, and social issues management should be thought of as policies" (p. 767). Wood (1991) later reconfigured their approach by recognizing the three dimensions as three principles. The result of the actions taken by organisations in order to improve their impact on society is what is understood by Corporate Social Performance (CSP) (e.g. Preston, 1988; Clarkson, 1995). While there have been several attempts to conceptualize CSP, there has yet to be an established definition (Wood, 1991). However, as previously described, Watrick and Cochran (1985) noted CSP as resting on "...the principles of social responsibility, the process of social responsiveness, and the policies of issue management" (p. 767), which has been generally accepted and used in research. The multiple stakeholders' view of performance has been cited to be the most popular way of measuring firm performance since it is "closest to the conceptual definition of performance" (Barney, 2002, p. 30). Wood identified environmental assessment, stakeholder management, and issue management as social responsibility processes (p. 694), while the policies section was reconstituted as outcomes of corporate behavior. Specific to the actual construct, CSP has been recognized as the modern day approach to dealing with the philosophical orientation of the four CSR components (McGuire, Sundgreen, & Schneeweis, 1998; Smith et al., 2001; Swanson, 1995). While there have been several attempts to conceptualize CSP, there has yet to be an established definition (Wood, 1991).

EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

Employee commitment has long been a focus of study for those interested in the design and management of organizations. Commitment has been found to be related to a variety of attitudinal and behavioural consequences among employees for example, motivation level, organizational citizenship, and turnover rates (Meyer & Allen, 1997). In turn, the positive benefits of a committed workforce are recognized as important determinants of organizational effectiveness.

Committed employees who are highly motivated to contribute their time and energy to the pursuit of organizational goals are increasingly acknowledged to be the primary asset available to an organization (Pfeffer, 1998). They provide the intellectual capital that, for many

organizations, has become their most critical asset (Stewart, 1997). Furthermore, employees who are committed to the organization and their collective well-being are more apt to generate the social capital—found in relationships characterized by high levels of trust and shared values—that facilitates organizational learning.

A review of the literature reveals that SIT (Social Identity Theory) provides an explanation for the link between corporate social activities and employees' work attitudes. The theory proposes that people tend to describe their self-descriptions in a social context and classify themselves and others into different social categories (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; Tajfel and Turner, 1985). A person has a repertoire of memberships in different social categories consisting of nationality, political af?liation, sport team, or similar groups (Hogg et al., 1995).

CSR – A STRING THAT EMBEDS EMPLOYEE'S COMMITMENT

Research conducted under the rubric of organizational climate has had success in aggregating individual employees' perceptions and investigating their relationship to both organizational-level and individual-level outcomes (see, e.g., Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998; Zohar & Luria, 2005). In addition, there are a handful of studies that have explored the relationship between aggregated employee job satisfaction attitudes and organizational (or unit-level) performance. Collier and Esteban (2007) showed that employees' support affects the implementation of ethical corporate behavior by companies that operate in different cultures globally. They added that employees with ethical values and vision that agree with those of the corporation deliver CSR practices effectively (Collier and Esteban, 2007). Stautmanis (2008) goes further to describe the value orientations of employees, in small and medium size businesses, that impact CSR in the company.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

In the current study, CSR is de?ned as corporate behaviors which aim to affect stakeholders positively and go beyond its economic interest. It is clear that CSR is closely tied to the concept of stakeholders. (Turker, 2008) Good working conditions including career opportunities, organizational justice, or family-friendly policies affect the level of organizational commitment among employees. Previous research also indicated that organizational commitment closely relates with some organizational factors like organizational climate (Stone and Porter, 1975; Welsch and LaVan, 1981) or the degree of person–organization ?t (Reichers, 1986; Wiener, 1982).

Employees may also be proud of being a member of this organization, as per SIT, members of a social category can share its success or failure and the positive feedback received from the satisfied customer is one of the most effective ways of measuring organizational success. It can be expected that the higher one's beliefs to the importance of CSR, the greater the strength of the link between CSR and organizational commitment. Therefore, CSR activities which are directly related with the physical and psychological working environment of employee's in?uence the organizational commitment. Based on this discussion, the study examines the following hypothesis:

H1: Corporate Social Responsibility has a positive relationship with the commitment of employees

With respect to gender, several studies highlight more ethical behavior among women than men. The study of Phau and Kea (2007) shows the superior value of ethics among female students of three countries studied Australia, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Empirical results are not always consistent. For example, Kidwell and colleagues (1997) found no significant differences between men and women concerning the reasons for their ethical behavior. However, the results of a meta-analysis by Borkowski and Ugras (1998) demonstrate that female exhibit more positive ethical attitudes than males. Accordingly, we expect that women adopt more moral business ethics attitudes than men, who are more focused on their amoral self-interest. Hence, we hypothesize

H2: Female employees show stronger preferences for the CSR initiatives in the organisation than male employees.

Employees as a unit of analysis have received limited attention in past CSR literature (Aguilera et al., 2007: 839; Rupp et al., 2006; Swanson & Niehoff, 2001). Past CSR and HRM (Human Resource Management) research has mainly focused on relationships between leadership and corporate social behavior (Swanson, 2008; Waldman, Siegel & Javidan, 2006), or defined socially responsible leadership (Waldman & Siegel, 2008). Although some theoretical models of Corporate Social Performance explicitly included employees as a level of analysis (e.g., Wood, 1991), few studies have investigated CSR's influence on employees attitude and behavior. The present study tried to envisage the effect of CSR on newly joined employees as against the experienced employees. Thus it was hypothesised that-

H3: CSR tend to affect the newly joined employees attitude towards employee commitment.

Meaningful work fosters the employees' self-esteem, hope, health, happiness and sense of personal growth (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Kets de Vries, 2001).Employees

will develop higher commitment when they perceive that their" organization acts as a "true corporate citizen". In the light of above thought the hypothesis was proposed.

H4: Perceptions of CSR towards external Stakeholders are positively related to employee commitment

The importance of CSR for an employee is included in the proposition. If an employee supports the notion that a ?rm has some social responsibilities beyond pro?t maximization, he or she may show a higher commitment to his or her organization which engages in CSR activities. When employees feel that the organization is responsible toward them (e.g., improving work-family balance, offering salaries higher than industry average), they tend to reciprocate (Settoon et al., 1996; Eisenberger et al., 2001) with positive attitudes toward the organization, including affective bonds and feelings of loyalty. The study tried to find the effect of CSR initiatives on the top and middle level managers. Thus it was hypothesized that

H5: Middle level managers are more committed to organizations due to the CSR initiatives than top level managers.

METHODOLOGY

Organisational Commitment Scale

Although literature provides some useful scales to measure organizational commitment in the current study, it is important to measure affective component of organizational commitment. Therefore, organizational commitment is measured with using a nine-item shortened version of the 15-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Mowday et al., 1979). The nine-item shortened version of OCQ is developed by Mowday et al. (1982) and has a large positive correlation with 15-item OCQ (Huselid and Day, 1991). The selected scale is one of the most frequently used and reliable measure of affective commitment and responses are obtained on a five-point Likert-type scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Corporate Social Responsibility Scale

The literature provided some valid and reliable scale to measure corporate social responsibility and corporate social involvement. The current study focuses on the responsibilities to various stakeholders hence the scale developed by Turker (2006) was used to measure CSR. In the study, the scale is rated on a Five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale has three sub factorial scales comprised of 17 items to measure corporate social responsibility to social and nonsocial stakeholders, employees of the organization.

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

The population consists of business professionals working in India and overseas. A self-administered questionnaire accompanied by a cover letter was mailed to a sample of 100 employees which were randomly selected from two business-related mailing groups. These mailing groups include a variety of business people working in the different organizations. A total of 86 questionnaires were returned and one was discarded due to incomplete data. Hence, the ?nal number of usable questionnaires was 85 with a response rate of 85%. Approximately more than half of the respondents were males (68.23%). According to the tenure with the current employer, 49.41% of them had less than 2 years, 35.29% had 3–5 years, 7.05% had 6–10 years, and 4.7% had more than 11 years' experience in their organizations.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Correlations analysis was used to determine correlation coefficients between dependent and independent variables of CSR to employees. The internal consistency of each scale was assessed with considering the number of items, inter-item correlations, and Cronbach's levels. The descriptive statistics was calculated as shown in Table 1

Table 1 : Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics		
	OCQ	CSR
N	85	85
Mean	18.22	35.31
Median	19.00	33.00
Mode	9.00	20.00
Std. Deviation	5.97	13.23
Variance	35.70	175.05
Range	27.00	60.00

N. Lawande, S. Bhosale

The correlation coefficient between the internal consistencies of each scale was assessed with considering the number of items, inter-item correlations, and Cronbach's level (Cortina, 1993).

As Table 2 presents that the inter-item correlations of all scales and Cronbach's .Table III represents the results for the ?rst hypothesis Corporate Social Responsibility has a positive relationship with the commitment of employees. The correlation coefficient is 0.8.

Table 3 Correlation between CSR and employee commitment

Table 4 represents the results for the second hypothesis female employees show stronger preferences for the CSR initiatives in the organisation than male employees. Independent samples t test was employed to evaluate the significance of difference between males and females perception towards social responsibility. The t value is significant at 0.05 levels.

Table 5 represents the results for the third hypothesis Corporate Social Responsibility has a positive relationship with the commitment of employees. The correlation coefficient is 0.911.

Table 5 Correlation between newly joined employees' perception of CSR and organisational commitment

Table 6 represents the result for the fourth hypothesis Perceptions of CSR towards internal stakeholders are positively related to organisational commitment. The correlation coefficient is 0.774.

Table 7 represents the result for the fifth hypothesis middle level managers are more committed to organizations due to the CSR initiatives than top level managers. Independent samples t test was employed to evaluate the significance of difference between middle and top level employees towards social responsibility. The t value is significant at 0.05 levels

Table 2 : Correlations

Scale	Reliability Coefficient	Average inter-item		Standardized
		correlations		item
OCQ	9 items	0.56	0.9177	0.9817
CSR	17 items	0.35	0.9013	0.8991

Table 3 : Correlations

		OCQ	CSR
OCQ	Pearson Correlation	1	.800**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	85
CSR	Pearson Correlation	.800**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	85	85

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 : Students t between male and female employees. / Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.002	.968	1.990	83	.068	5.62	3.03	-.42	11.67
Equal variances not assumed			1.985	52.53	.066	5.62	2.99	-.39	11.63

Corporate Social Responsibility and Employee

LIMITATIONS

There are some limitations of the current study and these should be considered when generalizing the validity of the scale. The scale does not cover every stakeholder of a business. In the study, CSR was measured based on the perception of employees who may not be well informed about the CSR involvement of their organization. Therefore, it is possible that there can be a difference between the perceptions of respondents and the actual involvement level. However, similar to previous studies in the literature (Mahon, 2002; Peterson, 2004; Whetten

and Mackey, 2002), the organizational commitment is also determined by the employees' perceptions. SIT suggests that the perception of members is more important in determining self-concept than any possible objective measure of the organization's social performance, regardless of the accuracy of the employee's perception (Peterson, 2004). Depending on the selected sample, the current study re?ects only the beliefs of employees, the internal stakeholders of a business. Although it was assumed that the respondents give accurate and reliable information about the CSR involvement of their organizations, it is possible that

Table 5 : Correlations

		CSR	OCQ
CSR	Pearson Correlation	1	.911**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	32	32
OCQ	Pearson Correlation	.911**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	32	32

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 : Correlations

		CSR	OCQ
OCQ	Pearson Correlation	1	.774**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	85
CSRINT	Pearson Correlation	.774**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	85	85

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 : Students t between middle and top level managers / Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference		Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.034	.854	-4.181	83	.000	-5.01	1.199		-7.398	-2.628
Equal variances not assumed			-4.262	80.143	.000	-5.01	1.176		-7.354	-2.672

they might provide incorrect or incomplete information.

DISCUSSION

The study indicated that, there is a strong link between the CSR towards employees and organizational commitment. In conclusion, the results of the study shows that employees prefer to work in socially responsible organizations and their organizational commitment level is positively affected by CSR towards society and employees. Based on the SIT literature, the prestige of an organization affects the self-esteem of its employees. The ?ndings of the current study are consistent with the proposed model of SIT as well. However, further studies are needed to con?rm these important ?ndings and to clarify the issue. CSR is not an optional extra. All businesses, particularly those that operate at a transnational level, are responsible not only for the ethical conduct of their operations but also for their impact on all their stakeholders now and in generations to come. Risks must be managed and minimized by decision-taking that is ethical in its processes and ethical in its objectives and outcomes. There are many gap areas where corporate can expand their contributions. The business model of CSR, while supporting important social infrastructure development and mainstreaming activities, cannot stop there. Business will have to take wider perspective and engage with the government to ensure the latter's role in providing adequate safety nets/mechanisms to address those beneficiaries who cannot easily be part of this process Organizational Commitment in CSR sometimes carries the hallmark of good management practices. However, even here credible measurement and evaluation of what their development initiatives are able to achieve is slowly emerging. The argument of this paper draws together research evidence relevant to ways in which companies can ensure that their employees are motivated and sufficiently committed to the effective delivery of CSR practices. Such a commitment becomes vitally important in situations where companies operate globally in multi-cultural contexts, where staff 'on the ground' has to take decisions without the bene?ts of consultation.

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